

Iruway CrafterSpace

Crafting Local Futures

Halekote (Durgadahalli),
Tumkur District, Karnataka

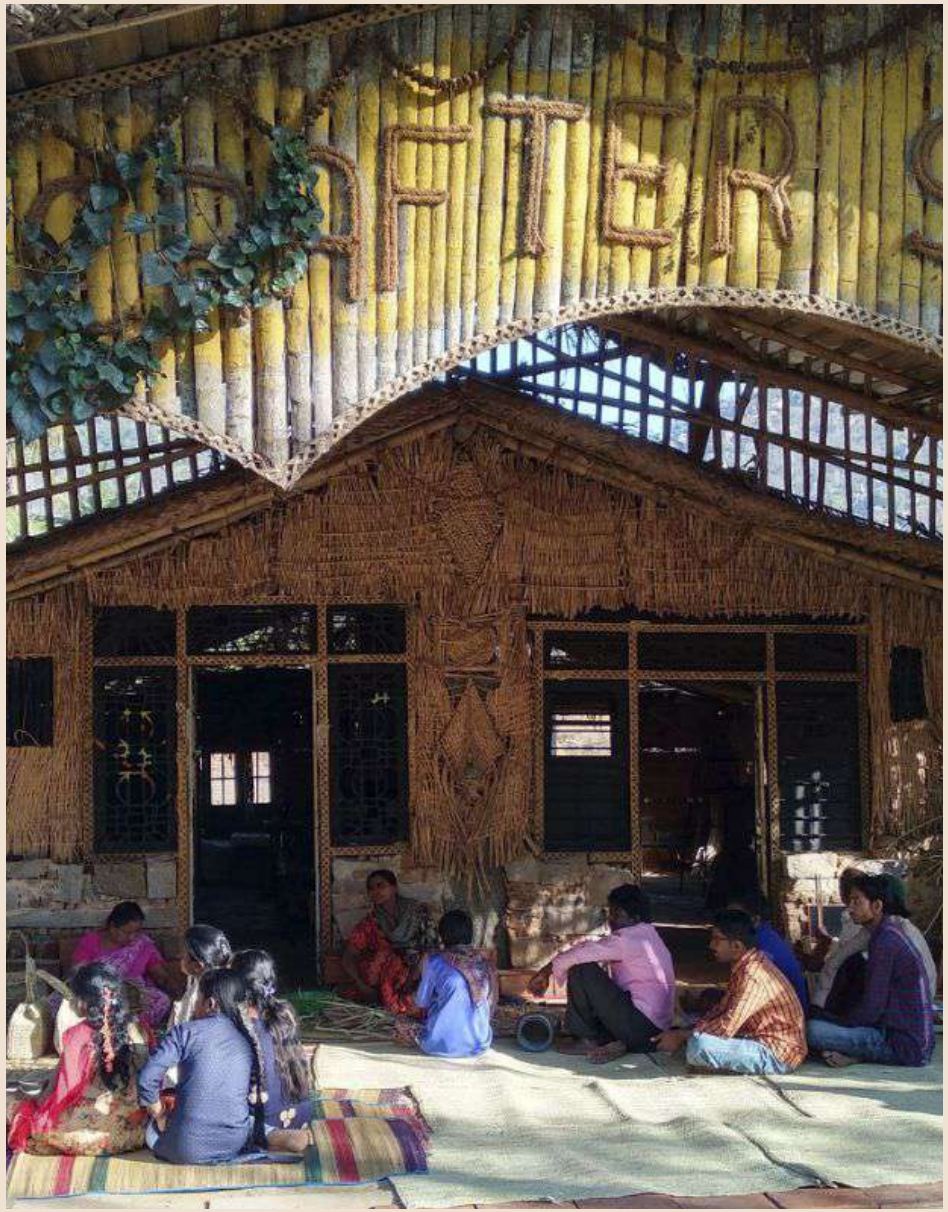
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About

CrafterSpace is a centre for creativity and dignified livelihood for women from villages surrounding the Devarayanadurga hills. CrafterSpace follows a community-ownership model free from external hierarchies. The crafters learn from each other, share work responsibilities, and are compensated equally for their time.

In addition to crafts production, CrafterSpace is also a community centre for the women from the surrounding villages to gather, learn, speak and be heard. The space hosts trainings, discussions, film screenings, and other community engagements to support the women in reclaiming their voice and rightful power.



Background

The livelihood of people in the villages surrounding the Devarayanadurga hills is still dictated by patriarchy and casteism.

Women, restricted by societal norms, are limited to roles such as domestic work, care or manual labour, and household confinement. These restrictions leave them vulnerable to marginalization and adversities such as domestic violence.

Some local communities depend on horticulture, while those with no land resort to manual labor. Lack of economic mobility often leads to displacement as people move to cities to find work.

CrafterSpace grew from the need for an alternative approach to address these challenges. It reintroduces traditional craft skills to local women, augmenting the rural area economy with craft capabilities and enhancing local cultural spaces. Local women work with locally-available natural materials to increase demand for local products.









Early Beginnings

CrafterSpace was established by Janastu in 2017 as a centre for rural crafts research, training, and practice in collaboration with pastoral and rural crafts revivalist Gopi Krishna (Mitan). Joined by four master craftspeople from different regions, we extensively researched locally available materials and how to turn them into craft products. We then invited and trained women from the surrounding villages in making these products.

Between 2018 and 2020, CrafterSpace was led by the master craftsmen. This phase saw numerous learnings as well as challenges. The training offered by the master craftsmen was invaluable. However, our vision for CrafterSpace as a community-owned initiative driven by local women did not fully materialize.

When the COVID pandemic hit, the master craftspeople returned to their hometowns in North Karnataka. In the initial years following the lockdown (2020 – 2023), CrafterSpace saw sporadic activities. It was at this time that our collective yearning for a community-ownership model with the women at the centre of all decision-making grew stronger.











Revival as Women-Owned Initiative

The women who worked previously in CrafterSpace were eager to see its revival. Guided by the ideal of community-ownership, the revival of CrafterSpace occurred organically in 2023 with the support of an all-woman team.

Many of the local women who joined us this time wanted to work with tailoring and fabrics, as that could be useful if they had to move to another town. Others were interested in working with local materials such as bulrush. Shama, a textile studio owner, Asha and Smitha of Gram Seva Sangha, and Rajeshwari and Hema (who were previously trained by the master craftsmen), trained the local women and lead CrafterSpace's revival.

With many societal hurdles to cross, these women together dreamt of and co-created a space for rural women to express their creativity and earn a dignified livelihood.













The Present

Today, CrafterSpace is a more resilient community-owned initiative driven by local women. We produce aesthetic and functional products from local, eco-friendly and recycled materials such as natural textile, bulrush grass, areca sheath and banana fibre.

CrafterSpace is also supportive space for rural women to gather, learn, be heard, and reclaim their voice and power. The space holds activities and events for women like book readings, discussions, movie screenings, paintings, and health programs..













Vision

Empowering Rural Women: CrafterSpace is dedicated to creating dignified livelihoods for women from surrounding rural communities, opening pathways beyond the limited roles – such as domestic work, care labour, working in fields, and household confinement – that define their lives in these settings. The vision of CrafterSpace is to be a self-sustaining enterprise with women leadership and a place of experimentation, creativity, and learning for rural women. Beyond crafts, CrafterSpace is a space of belonging for the local women where they can gather, learn, and empower each other.

Revival of Rural Crafts: Also at the heart of CrafterSpace is the revival of local craft traditions using natural and locally-sourced materials in combination with progressive techniques. We envision rural communities that are economically resilient and culturally valued, with sustainable, place-rooted alternatives to migration for livelihood and where traditional crafts are living, evolving practices that sustain families and enrich local economies.

Our Crafters (2023 – Present)

We tend to have between ten and twenty-five women visiting CrafterSpace regularly for livelihood at any given period of time. Here are some of our crafters



Rajeshwari

Originally from Coimbatore but now settled in Tumkur, Rajeshwari was trained by Master Crafters Davalappa and Siddhava (artisans from North Karnataka). Previously a beautician, she is passionate about weaving and making clay ornaments. She is one of the primary trainers for the weaving team.



Shashikala

Aso trained by Master Crafters Davalappa and Siddhava and a trainer for the weaving team. Shashi is a prominent member of the female community banking Sanga. She also works as a flower garland maker and areca nut picker, but prefers working here as it protects her from the elements of nature and she can meet everyone.



Shardhamma

Shardhamma is one of the weavers. She is a second wife; her sister wife lives in another village. Most of her family is outside this village, studying in Tumkur or settled in Bangalore. She finds being idle in her home to be boring and lonely and likes hanging out with the women in the Crafts Centre every day.



Siddhamma

Siddhamma is one of the weavers in the centre. She initially found this work monotonous, but now says she enjoys it and finds peace in doing it.

Our Crafters



Kusuma

Kusuma is a weaver. She says the process of weaving and learning the skill has inspired her to learn more and improve her work. It has made her think that she can now do and learn anything she puts herself to. This is her first job outside home.



Radhamma

Radhamma is a weaver. She used to work in a factory cutting vegetables. She came to see the work being done in CrafterSpace and really liked the environment as everyone was making and learning together and not isolated. She enjoys making complex weaves and likes how they look when they are finished.



Varalakshmi

Varalakshmi is one of the weavers who also has a great hand in printing on textiles. She says that she gets immense satisfaction looking at the finished products and also enjoys doing block printing on fabric.



Hanumakka

Hanumakka is one of the weavers. She is a seasonal worker who stomps on mustard and removes weeds from fields. She enjoys the work here as usually she has to be home alone but now has so many people she can work, socialise and joke around with.

Our Crafters



Narsamma

Narsamma is one of the weavers. She says that she enjoys the process of weaving and finds happiness in each and every weave she does.



Nagamma

Nagamma is one of the new weavers and currently prepares the reed grass before it is woven. She enjoys seeing how this grass transforms into finished items. She is also learning basic weaves from her peers. Prior to this work, she often went to stomp on Ragi to harvest it.



Mamata

Mamta is a weaver. She says that weaving as a skill is useful as she can weave household things for her family.



Indrani

Indrani is a creative force making designs for embroideries and also tailoring. She got into arts and creativity while helping her children with their assignments and projects. That's when she realized she had a passion for creating visuals. Now she is glad that this passion can be economically viable.

Our Crafters



Dhanalakshmi

A tailor and embroidery expert, Dhanalakshmi made blouses on order after learning tailoring from her tailor husband. She says that she can explore more patterns and designs at CrafterSpace than before. She speaks English and completed 10th class in Bengaluru.



Mahadevamma

Mahadevamma is a tailor and weaver. She wakes up, works in the field, then makes food for 15 people working in the field and delivers it to them. After that, she rushes to CrafterSpace. She says it's important for her to learn new skills. She enjoys making blouses, dresses, bags and everything new. She likes that she does something new here every day.



Prema

Prema is one of the new members of the textile team. She is an experienced and artistic tailor and stitches women's dresses on order from home. She likes learning new designs and found the work at CrafterSpace to be interesting and decided to work here too. In addition to working at home and here, she also works in a farm that grows tomatoes.



Sandhya

Sandhya is part of the tailoring team. She is from Andhra Pradesh and came here when she got married. This is her first time working outside her home. She says learning new things every day has reduced her hesitation and she has started believing that she can also make things happen and make a positive change.

Our Crafters



Anuja

Anuja is a tailor and printing team member. She likes coming here as it allows her to be free of tensions and forget about her responsibilities at home. She feels free here and enjoys working with her friends.



Hema

Hema is part of printing and tailoring team and lives the closest to CrafterSpace. She found it to very interesting to see what happens here and started to enjoy the tailoring and printing processes. She comes here because she wants to learn more. She also likes the company of her friends here.



Kavya

Kavya is one of the youngest and most energetic members of the fabric team. She used to work in the fields to harvest crops. Now she enjoys tailoring the most and likes picking and arranging flowers for eco-printing.



Bindu

Bindu is also one of the youngest of the group. She does embroidery and is learning tailoring. This is her first job after her 10th class. She likes coming here because she can talk to others, but says that she liked going to school even more!



Rama Devi

Rama is part of the fabric team. Before coming here, she worked as a housekeeping staff in Bangalore at BBMP. She enjoys working on embroidery. She says that she still has a lot to learn and is currently training in tailoring. She also wants to learn to use a computer on her own to store and work with images.

Products

Our products are handmade from natural, non-toxic, locally available and sustainable materials like bulrush, arecanut sheath, coconut fibre, and natural textile. Our aesthetic and functional product range includes decorative lamps, containers, slippers, furniture, textiles and clothing, and gift boxes.

Currently, our main products are bulrush-based woven products and fabric scrap and embroidery based textile products.

Natural

Natural materials like Areca, Bulrush, Cotton Fabric, and Palm are used in creative ways to bring out the uniqueness of the location

Handmade

Our products are fully handmade using local handmade tools and design enhancements by youth using our makerspace

Community

CrafterSpace is run by women on a community-ownership model to sustainably enable local people to meet their needs

Our Specialities

Bulrush-based Woven Products: Harvested by hand from the placid swamps of the Devarayanadurga region, jondu (bulrush) grass is a secret gift from nature. The grass is soft and easily molded when wet and becomes stable and holds shape when dried. Local women crafters deftly weave the harvested grass into beautiful functional products using an interlacing method that requires no glue or binding – making them completely natural and free from harmful materials.







Our Specialities

Fabfic Scrap and Embroidery based Textiles: Our skillful fabric team turns discarded pure-cotton fabric scraps from a local textile studio into delightful mosaics. These are then stitched into various products. We also make artful embroideries and products that combine embroidery and patchwork of fabric scraps.

In addition, we make traditional block-printed (with wooden blocks) and eco-printed (using flowers, leaves, and stems) textile products on order.









Catalogue Samples



Products

Eco-friendly. Handmade.

Baskets



Size: H11" x W14.1/2"



Size: H7.1/2" x W9.1/2"



Size: H3" x W10"



Size: H11" x W12"



Size: H7.1/4" x W12"



Size: H5" x W7"



Size: H2.1/2" x W10.1/2"

Catalogue Samples

Bags



Size: H6.1/2" x W6"



Size: H7.1/2" x W6"



Size: H8" x W9"



Size: H6.3/4" x W6.1/2"



Size: D9.1/2" x D9.1/2"





Decorative Light



Size: **H10” x W15”**

Catalogue Samples



Containers



Size: H3.3/4" x W9"



Size: H4" x W8.1/2"



Size: H3.3/4" x W5.1/2"



Size: H11" x W11.1/2"



Size: H9" x W9.1/2"



Size: H4.1/2" x W5"

Catalogue Samples

Containers



Size: D10” x D10”



Size: D9” x D9”



Size: D8” x D8”



Size: H10” x W11.1/2”



Size: H8” x W16”

Catalogue Samples



Slippers



Size: 6



Size: 6



Size: 8

Catalogue Samples

Furniture



Size: H12.1/2” x W12”

Catalogue Samples



Badges





Catalogue Samples



Return Gift Boxes



Size: H2" x W6.3/4"



Catalogue Samples

Kids Fabrics





Catalogue Samples













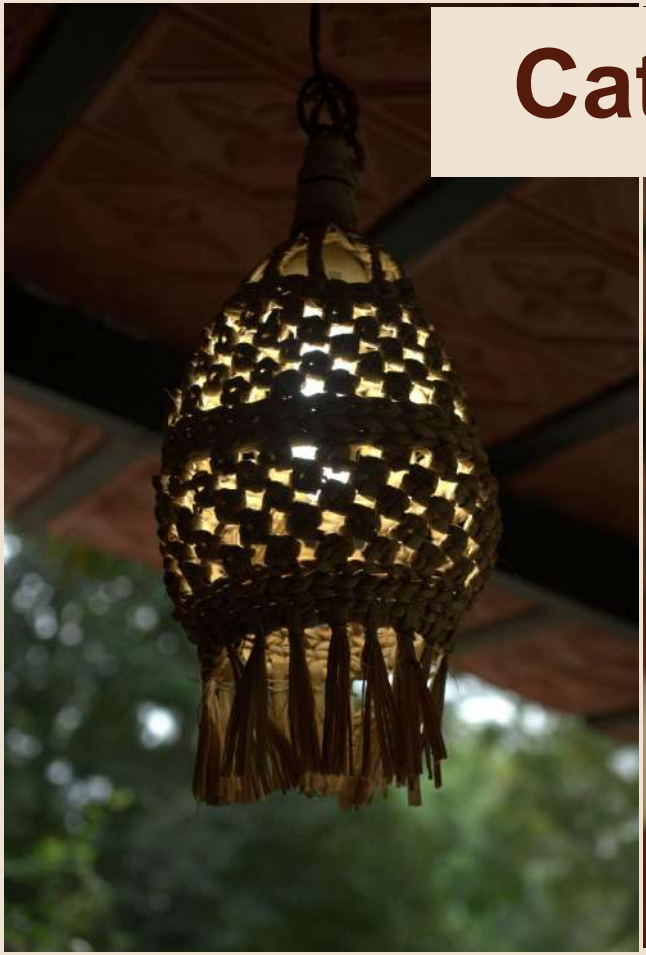

Eco-printed Fabrics





Catalogue Samples

Catalogue Samples









Miscellaneous



Activities at a Glance

CrafterSpace is not just about crafts. It is a safe space for women to gather, learn, be heard, gain confidence, and reclaim their voice and power.





Dental Awareness (2024): Dr. Pavani led an insightful dental awareness session, engaging participants with essential oral health tips and hands-on demonstrations.

Terracotta Workshop by Rajeshwari (2024)







Activities at a Glance



Workshop on making jondu products at Poorna Santhe conducted by our artisans Hanumakka and Kusuma





Session on chemical pesticides and how corporate giants wreak havoc on the planet (2024).





Forester and Botanist Seshadri Ramaswamy conducts an ecoprinting session (2023)

Activities at a Glance





Weekly gathering: The women shared their “River of Life” stories. These inspiring stories reminded us of the strength and resilience that women possess, and showed that the bond that we share goes beyond crafting; CrafterSpace is a support system, a place to uplift and inspire one another

Festival day tour and the women sharing stories of their villages and the Devarayanadurga hill (2023).





Trip to Goravanahalli (2024)



Activities at a Glance



Kids from nearby villages drop by to try their hand at weaving, embroidery and other crafts during the summer vacation.





Maruthi International School students learning about jondu craftmaking and ecoprinting from Radhamma and Ananya (2023).







Children's festival celebrating the art of kids from Thimanayakahalli village.

Activities at a Glance



Half day workshop conducted by our crafters for Fashion Technology students of KLE Nijalingappa College (September 2026)



Daily Book Reading Circle (since September 2026)





Yoga for women by Pooja Jain (L, October 2026) and regular yoga practice circle (R, since August 2026)

Activities at a Glance

Workshops conducted by our crafters











Collaborate With Us

CrafterSpace demonstrates the innate strength and resilience that women possess and their capacity to overcome societal hurdles and personal adversity when they come together in a safe space. The transformation is palpable – happier women, stronger families with a brighter future, and a growing sense of possibility and hope for women across the community.

As we look ahead, we invite CSR partners, philanthropists, and well-wishers to join us in our mission to empower rural women and promote traditional rural crafts.







Collaborate With Us

You can support and collaborate with us in multiple ways.

- **Order from Us**: We offer aesthetic, functional, and eco-friendly products for your home and offices. We also take custom orders for environment-friendly weddings, conferences, and other events. We display our products in various events and exhibitions such as Ragi Kana Santhe in Bangalore and the Indian Handmade Collective in Mysore and Hyderabad.

- **Support Ongoing Needs and Expenses**: Your contributions help us continue our regular activities and trainings for rural women, market our products to reach a wider audience, conduct research on local materials and progressive tools, and improve our infrastructure to provide a better work environment for our crafters.

- **Conduct Activities**: Conduct an activity, event, or training for rural women that helps them learn, feel supported, earn a living, and reclaim their power.

- **Support Us through CSR**: Collaborate with us in empowering rural women and enhancing rural livelihoods through CSR donations and institutional funding support.

About Janastu and IruWay Farm

Janastu is a registered non-profit that has been conducting research and technology development in the social sector for almost two decades. As a people-oriented collective, our work lies at the intersections of women's welfare, rural inclusion, and technology. CrafterSpace is an initiative of Janastu.

Janastu and CrafterSpace are hosted in IruWay Farm, an inclusive rural laboratory for the development of holistic systems that bring people from different backgrounds – rural and urban alike – to experience and address community challenges together.

Let it be people!

Base camp

Iruway

Visit Us

Iruway CrafterSpace is located at the foothills of Devarayanadurga near Durgadahalli village in Tumakuru district, at the edge of a reserve forest. It is about 14 km from Tumakuru and 75 km from Bengaluru.

Address:

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